

2004 Report of Accomplishments

South Yakima Conservation District



Natural Resource Improvements in 2004 - Summary

- In 2004 NRCS proceeded with implementation of more than 300 conservation contracts. Most participants are involved in the EQIP program, however, 5 WRP contracts and two WHIP contracts are included.
- 67 new EQIP contracts were obligated for funding in 2004 to improve the conservation of more than 5,000 acres of irrigated land, dry cropland, pasture land and rangeland.



Mission of the South Yakima Conservation District

- Our primary goal is to promote the wise use, development, and conservation of our renewable natural resources.

Water Quality Implementation

- The Water Quality Implementation Grant is used in conjunction with existing district grants that provide education, outreach, and technical assistance for the landowners, while this grant provides the cost-share incentive to implement BMP's.
- SYCD received over 60 project applications for the 2004-2005 grant cycle and only 18 projects could be funded. To date, 9 landowners have converted from a rill irrigation system to a sprinkler system on 92 acres, one conversion to a drip system on 8 acres, and one pasture rehab on 20.8 acres. High priority BMP implementation includes upgrading irrigation systems, improving pastures through re-seeding, cross-fencing, or aeration, pasture management, and fencing livestock away from drains.

Basic Funding

- Basic funding is used to help provide training and to help pay wages for non-grant employee staff.

Local Funding

- Local assessment is used for district overhead and to help cover costs not allowed by grants. These funds are also used for any grant that demands a percentage cash match.

Professional Engineering

The most significant on the landscape accomplishment in the South Central Professional Engineering cluster (Underwood, South Yakima, North Yakima, Benton, Franklin, Othello, Warden, Moses Lake, and Upper Grant CDs) was the implementation of 62 BMPs:

- 38 Livestock BMPs (nutrient management on dairies and some feed lots)
- 24 irrigation improvement BMPs (conversions to more efficient methods)
- 12 of the above 62 BMPs were on operations meeting the definition of a "small farm"
- A total of 55 landowners received some type of technical engineering assistance that may or may not have included these BMPs. Over 7300 acres were directly impacted from a conservation standpoint by the implementation of these BMPs. The actual total number of acres benefited by the implementation of these BMPs is difficult to gage. There is an obvious benefit from BMPs on livestock operations (such as lined waste storage ponds, settling basins, concrete manure storage structures, berms, diversions, terraces, etc.) as well as from the irrigation improvements (system upgrades, tailwater recovery systems, etc.) to surface and subsurface waters of the state of Washington. The impact to streams and rivers that contain federally listed threatened and endangered species is difficult to quantify, but cannot be understated.

Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP)

- This year is the district's fifth year of CREP focused on assisting landowners along salmonid waterways with riparian buffers. The district has four contracts totaling 158.7 acres along 7.8 miles of the Yakima River. The program still has an open enrollment. The goal for this year is to continue assistance on the current contracts and service others as they arise.
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Livestock/Dairies

- South Yakima "clusters" with Kittitas, Underwood, Benton, and North Yakima CD's to provide technical assistance within the cluster. We provide technical assistance to approximately 20 operators per month for the development, update, and implementation of their Nutrient Management Plan. Currently, there is no cost-share available for cooperators to implement BMP's.
 - Seventy-seven of the seventy-eight registered facilities within our cluster met the December 31, 2003 deadline for certification.
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Rill BMP

- Despite all of the conversions being installed in SYCD, 40% of fields are still rill irrigated and for one reason or another will remain so. The primary focus of this grant is to provide technical assistance to those landowners to install and implement BMP's that will reduce erosion and runoff from rill irrigation.
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Ecology-funded projects

- Grant funds received from the Department of Ecology allowed SYCD staff during 2004 to: review irrigation designs and write farm plans; lease the district's interseed drill to cooperators; check the turbidity of Granger Drain during the irrigation season on a weekly basis; analyze six years of water quality data from the Roza-Sunnyside Board of Joint Control, compare the substantial water quality improvements with government-funded BMP implementation rates, and write up the findings in a report titled "Conservation Practices and Water Quality Trends in Sulphur Creek Wasteway and Granger Drain Watersheds, 1997-2002"; and, in a three-way partnership between USGS, BCD, and SYCD, begin studying the eutrophication processes in the lower Yakima River in March, including operation of three continuous water quality monitors at 11 sites, a morphology and plant/algae distribution assessment, and two synoptic surveys of all major tributaries, irrigation return drains, and several mainstem sites.
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Community Collaboration & Coordination

- The district was involved in the Lower Work Group (LWG) process for EQIP, staff are on the Granger Drain TMDL Technical Advisory Committee, and also participate in the Rosa Sunnyside Board of Joint Control.
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Information & Education

- Eagle Earth Day
- District Newsletter
- Partner with Benton CD for Salmon in the Classroom.

Washington Conservation Districts assisting land managers with their conservation choices

